

COMMON TELEPHONE

scams

Con artists

are always developing new scams. Here are some common ones:

Prize Offers: You usually have to do something to get your “free” prize - attend a sales presentation, buy something, or give out a credit card number. The prizes are generally worthless or overpriced.

Travel Packages: “Free” or “low-cost” vacations can end up costing a lot with all their hidden costs. Or, they may never happen. You may pay a high price for some part of the package - like hotel or airfare. The total cost may run two to three times more than what you’d expect to pay or what you were led to believe.

Vitamins and other health products: The sales pitch also may include a prize offer. This is to entice you to pay hundreds of dollars for products that are worth very little.

Investments: People lose millions of dollars each year in “get-rich-quick” schemes that promise high returns with little or no risk. These could include gemstones, rare coins, oil and gas leases, precious metals, art, and other “investment opportunities.” These turn out to be worthless or worth much less than what you paid.

Charities: Con artists often label phone charities with names that sound like better known, reputable organizations. They won’t send you written information or wait for you to check them out with watchdog groups like those listed later under “For More Information.”

Recovery scams: If you buy into any of the above scams, you are likely to be called again by someone promising to get your money back. Be careful not to lose more money in this common practice. Even law enforcement officials can't guarantee to recover your money.

TIP-OFF TO

fraud

Telephone con artists spend a lot of time polishing their “lines” to get you to buy. Here are some of them:

You have to act “now” - or the offer won’t be good.

You’ve won a “free” gift, vacation, or prize and you pay “only” for “postage and handling” or other charges.

You must send money, give a credit card or bank account number, or have a check picked up by courier - before you’ve had a chance to carefully consider the offer.

You don’t need to check out their company with anyone - including your family, lawyer, accountant, local Better Business Bureau, or consumer protection agency.

You don’t need any written information about their company or their references.

You can’t afford to miss this “high-profit, no-risk” offer.

If you hear these - or similar - lines from a telephone salesperson, just hang up the phone.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO

Protect Yourself

It’s very difficult

to get your money back if you get cheated over the phone. So, before you buy anything by telephone, remember:

Don’t buy by phone from unfamiliar companies.

Legitimate businesses understand when you want more information about their offer or company.

Always ask for and wait until you receive written material about any offer or charity. If you get brochures about expensive investments, ask someone whose financial advice you trust to review them.

Always check out unfamiliar companies with your local consumer protection agency; Better Business Bureau, state Attorney General, the National Fraud Information Center or other groups listed later under “For More Information.” Unfortunately, not all bad businesses can be identified through these organizations.

Always take your time in making a decision.

Legitimate companies won’t pressure you to make a fast decision.

It’s never rude to wait and think about an offer. Be sure to talk over big investments offered by telephone salespeople with a trusted friend, family member, or financial advisor.

Never respond to an offer you don’t thoroughly understand.

Never send money or give out your credit card or bank account number to unfamiliar companies.

Be aware that any personal or financial information you provide may be sold to other companies.

FOR MORE

Information

Before you buy from an unfamiliar organization, check it out first with some of these groups. (Your local phone directory has phone numbers and addresses.)

National Fraud Information Center

(Call toll-free 1-800-876-7060
Monday through Friday, 9:00AM
to 5:30PM EST)

State Attorney General

Better Business Bureau

Local consumer protection organization

Check national charities with these groups:

Philanthropic Advisory Service Council of
Better Business Bureaus, 4200 Wilson
Boulevard, Arlington, VA 22203-1804
(703)-276-0100

National Charities Information Bureau, 19
Union Square West, New York, NY
10003-3395 (212)-929-6300

To avoid unwanted telephone sales calls from many national marketers, send your name, address, and telephone number to:

Direct Marketing Association Telephone
Preference Service, P.O. Box 9014,
Farmingdale, NY 11735-9014

Under the Telephone Consumer Protection Act of 1991, you can request that companies put you on their “do not call” lists. If the company calls you again, you can bring an action in Small Claims Court.

FOR OTHER

elp **Contact**

**Federal Trade Commission
Correspondence Branch**
6th and Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20580
202-326-2222, TDD: 202-326-2502

Your comments help in its law enforcement efforts. For a list of more than 100 free publications on telemarketing fraud and other consumer issues, write for a copy of Best Sellers, Public Reference, FTC, Washington, DC 20580.

AARP
601 E Street, NW
Washington, DC 20049

Office of Attorney General
Bureau of Consumer Protection
14th Floor, Strawberry Square
Harrisburg, PA 17120
Toll-Free Consumer Hotline:
1-800-441-2555

TDD# 1-800-382-4814

*The Pennsylvania Attorney General's
Internet address is:
<http://www.attorneygeneral.gov>*

TELEPHONE c a m s and Older Consumers



Brought to you as a public service by the Federal Trade Commission, the American Association of Retired Persons and the Office of Attorney General.

Mike Fisher
Attorney General of Pennsylvania

If you're an "older" consumer,

age 60 or more, be careful about buying things by telephone. You may be a special target of those selling bogus products and services.

It's easy enough to fall prey. Telemarketing fraud is a multi-billion dollar business in the United States. Every year, thousands of consumers lose from a few dollars to their life savings to telephone con artists.

To protect yourself when you get a sales offer by phone, follow these simple rules:

- 1 Don't buy by phone from unfamiliar companies.
- 2 Always take your time making a decision.

Legitimate businesses that sell by phone understand this. Remember: most people who lose money in telemarketing scams never see a penny of it again.

HOW OLDER
PEOPLE BECOME

**victims of
Telemarketing Fraud**

Fraudulent telemarketers

try to take advantage of older people who may be more trusting and polite toward strangers. Older women living alone are special targets of these phone calls.

Here are some of the reasons people become victims of telemarketing fraud:

Often it's hard to know whether a sales call is legitimate. Telephone con artists are skilled at sounding believable - even when they're really telling lies.

Sometimes telephone con artists reach you when you're feeling lonely. They may call day after day - until you feel it's a friend, not a stranger, trying to sell you something.

You may find it hard to get salespeople off the phone - even if they're selling something you're not interested in. You don't want to be rude.

You may be promised free gifts, prizes, or vacations - or the "investment of a lifetime" - but only if you act "right away." It may sound like a really good deal.

In fact, telephone con artists are only after your money:

**DON'T
GIVE IT
TO THEM**